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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 281618Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0713
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
ZEN AMCONSUL BELFAST (POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 02024

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, UK
SUBJECT: IMMOBILITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

CONGEN BELFAST DRAFTED THIS MESSAGE JUNE 28

1. SUMMARY. THIS MESSAGE IS AN IMPRESSIONISTIC SURVEY OF THE CURRENT SCENE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: POLITICAL IMMOBILISM IN EXPECTATION OF PARILAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE FALL; THE REV. IAN PAISLEY ON THE OFFENSIVE IN THE OFFENSIVE MANNER CHARACTERISTIC OF HIM; LOOSE TALK ABOUT A NEGOTIATED, INDEPENDENT NI UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS, AND ENCOURAGING FOREIGN (I.E., AMERICAN) INVESTMENT IN NI, BUT DISCOURAGING UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES. END SUMMARY.

2. NOT MUCH IS HAPPENING IN NI THESE DAYS, AS THE TRADITIONAL PROTESTANTS PREPARE FOR THE ORANGE ORDER'S RITUAL CELEBRATIONS JULY 12. NO ONE EXPECTS SERIOUS POLITICAL INITIATIVES IN WHAT EVERYONE SEES AS A PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD. THE PARTY REPRESENTING THE MAINSTREAM OF THE MAJORITY COMMUNITY, THE OFFICIAL UNIONISTS, IS CONFIDENTIAL

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FLIRTING WITH MRS. THATCHER: UNIONISTS TEND TO BE CONSERVATIVE AND USED TO BE CLOSE TO THE TORIES. MORE IMPORTANTLY THESE DAYS, THEY THINK THEY PROBABLY COULD GET MORE FROM A HUNG TORY MAJORITY THAN FROM LABOR. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOT NECESSARILY A CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP, THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE PARTY OF THE MINORITY, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOR PARTY, TOOK

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THE SAME TONE AS THE LYNCH GOVERNMENT IN THE POLEMIC WITH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NI MASON DURING THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE YEAR. SDLP LEADERS CONTINUE COMMENTING ON SPECIFIC POINTS, BUT ON THE WHOLE THEY ARE AS QUIET NOW AS LYNCH: AFTER THE ELECTIONS WE CAN EXPECT THEM TO OPEN UP AGAIN IN FAVOR OF AN AGREED UNITED IRELAND.
3. "POWER SHARING" IS NOW A DIRTY PHRASE IN NI. HMG HAS ABANDONED IT AS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE; LOYALISTS REFUSE TO COUNTENANCE IT, AND REPUBLICANS ARE DISCOURAGED. BUT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, A FAIR NUMBER OF THE 26 DISTRICT COUNCILS ACTUALLY HAVE WORKED OUT A FORM OF SHARING POWER. IT TENDS TO BE AMONG OFFICIAL UNIONISTS, THE SDLP, AND THE NONSECTARIAN ALLIANCE PARTY AND IS SUBJECT TO ALL SORTS OF PRESSURES, BUT THE JUNE TURNOVER OF EXECUTIVE OFFICES SAW CONSIDERABLE PLANNED ROTATION AMONG THE PARTIES. THE HOOKER, OF COURSE, IS THAT THERE IS LITTLE POWER TO SHARE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, SO THE STAKES ARE NOT HIGH.

4. NIO PREPARES FOR ELECTIONS: THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE IS BEGINNING STAFF WORK FOR A NEW SECRETARY OF STATE AND PERHAPS A NEW MAJORITY: ANALYSES OF PROBLEMS AND POSITIONS, INCLUDING THE OUTLINE OF THE FIXED POLITICAL LINES AND BOUNDARIES OF ACCEPTABLE GOVERN-MENTAL ACTION NEEDED FOR THE NEOPHYTES; AND OPTION PAPERS. AS MOVEMENT IN THE PROVINCE HAS BECOME SOME-
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WHAT SAFER, THE NIO ALSO IS ENCOURAGING LABOR MINISTERS TO VISIT IN THE HOPE OF EDUCATING THEM ON THE BASICS.

5. IAN PAISLEY: ONE OF THE FOUR SIGNIFICANT PARTIES IS ENTERING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN EARLY: REV. IAN PAISLEY'S DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS. MANY BELIEVE THE DUP PEAKED AT THE TIME OF PAISLEY'S UNSUCCESSFUL GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT IN MAY 1977, BUT HE STILL REPRESENTS A DEEP TENDENCY WITHIN THE MAJORITY COMMUNITY. THE OFFICIAL UNIONISTS REBUFFED HIS OFFER TO SHARE OUT THE WESTMINSTER CONSTITUENCIES, SO HE IS BIFFING THEM AS HARD AS THE CATHOLIC TAIGS AND THE LABOR GOVERNMENT. ONE MAJOR THEME EMERGED AS PAISLEY BAITED THE FOREIGN SECRETARY IN THE HOUSE JUNE 26 OVER THE MOST RECENT RHODESIAN MASSACRE: "THE MURDER TRIANGLE" OF THE SOVIET COMMUNISM, INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. IN ADDITION TO AFRICA, PAISLEY SEES THE CONFLUENCE OF THAT TRIANGLE IN NI. THE DUP WILL ALSO PRESS CHARGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT DISCRIMI-NATES IN FAVOR OF CATHOLICS, AND IS TRYING TO SEPARATE PROTESTANT-DOMINATED AREAS IN NI SO AS TO ENCOURAGE IRISH UNITY.

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6. AN INDEPENDENT NI?: THERE IS ONE NEW POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, ALTHOUGH OF DOUBTFUL SIGNIFICANCE. IT SURFACED IN ARTICLES IN THE LAST TWO ISSUES OF THE "SUNDAY TIMES": IN SIMPLE TERMS, THE THESIS IS THAT THE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC WORKING CLASSES ARE TIRED OF TERRORISM AND ARE UNITING VIA THEIR RESPECTIVE PARA-MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS TO ACHIEVE A NEGOTIATED, INDEPENDENT NI. THE IDEA MEN ARE THE QUIXOTIC BUT ABLE CATHOLIC PADDY DEVLIN AND PROTESTANT GLENN BARR, WHO HAVE STRONG TIES TO THE LABOR MOVEMENT. DEVLIN EXPLAINS

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PRIVATELY THAT THERE WILL BE NO PEACE IN IRELAND UNTIL THE PARAMILITARIES ARE NEUTRALIZED BY BRINGING THEM INTO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE STRONGEST LOYALIST PARA-MILITARY, THE ULSTER DEFENSE ASSOCIATION, SEEMS INTERESTED, BUT THE PROVISIONAL IRA SEEMS SKEPTICAL. THEIR INTERESTS DIFFER, AND THE MANY SKEPTICS NOTE THE DANGER OF ENTRUSTING THEIR DESTINY TO THOSE KILLERS. WE ARE AT A LOSS AS TO HOW THIS FITS INTO DEVLIN'S LAUNCHING THIS WEEK OF A UNITED PARTY.

7. TERRORISM: THE PROVISIONAL IRA'S WAR AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES AT A LOW LEVEL COMPARED TO EARLIER YEARS, BUT WITH A SPURT OF KILLINGS (SEPTEL). SENIOR POLICE OFFICIALS ARE DULY CAUTIOUS BUT MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT DOMINATING PIRA IN THE NEXT YEAR OR TWO THAN THE ARMY IS: THE NUMBER TWO GENERAL IN NI TOLD US THIS WEEK THAT THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE REDUCED TERRORIST

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ACTIVITY ABOUT AS MUCH AS MILITARY METHODS PERMIT.

8. FOREIGN INVESTMENT: GOVERNMENT MINISTERS ARE PLEASED WITH THEIR BREAKTHROUGH IN SNATCHING A GENERAL MOTORS INVESTMENT FOR BELFAST THAT HAD ALMOST BEEN SET FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THE REPUBLIC. THEY ARE ALSO ON THE EDGE OF A LARGER DEAL WITH AN INDEPENDENT AMERICAN GROUP FOR A CAR ASSEMBLY PLANT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF CATHOLIC WEST BELFAST WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT IS HIGH. WE GATHER THAT THE PROJECT HAD BEEN ON THE WAY TO APPROVAL WHEN THE KIDNAPPINGS OF LAST WEEK (REFTEL) SET THE AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN TO WONDER. THERE WILL PROBABLY BE CONSIDERABLE LOCAL CONCERN SHOULD THE DEAL GO THROUGH BECAUSE NI WILL PUT UP MOST OF THE LARGE INVESTMENT INVOLVED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A FAIRLY HIGH RISK VENTURE. COINCIDENTALLY, THERE WAS MUCH CONCERN OVER THE LATEST UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURE FOR NI: 11.9 PERCENT. THAT IS UP ABOUT HALF A PERCENT, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF SCHOOL LEAVERS. FOREIGN INVESTMENT HELPS NI, BUT THE KIND OF DEVELOPMENT THAT DENTS THAT FIGURE COMES ONLY FROM LOCAL RESOURCES. RENDAHL

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